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THE
PROCEEDINGS

OF THE
Dublin - ASSOCIATION

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OF THE
FRIENDS

OF THE
CONSTITUTION,

Liberty and Peace,

*Held at the King's Arms Tavern, in Fowne's-street,
DUBLIN, December 21, 1792.*

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1792

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OF THE

BOARD

OF THE

C. O. T. & C. N.



and Peace

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LIBERTY AND PEACE.

It is with pleasure that the Publisher present to the English Nation the following admirable Resolutions and Declaration by the Friends of the Constitution in Ireland. Let them compare this manly and patriotic Paper with the lamentable Associations against Republicans and Levellers in England, and see how sound wisdom and becoming fortitude triumph over the folly and terror that have dictated most of our recent Club essays.

The following Address and Declaration were unanimously agreed upon.

His Grace the Duke of LEINSTER in the Chair,

ADDRESS.

EXPERIENCE has taught the reasoning part of mankind the following simple truths:—That in Political Institutions, nothing is stable that is not just; that gross and increasing abuses lead necessarily to violence and revolution, timely and effectual reform to peace and

security; that as violence, therefore, and revolution, are but desperate remedies for desperate evils, and as, once applied, it is not in human wisdom to foresee, or prescribe limits to their course, it is the extreme, either of human folly or depravity, in governors to make such remedies seem generally necessary, or in the people, without evident and palpable necessity, to resort to them. That truths, which the history of past ages has impressed on the conviction of mankind, and to which the experience of the present times adds new force, should yet be apparently overlooked by both the Government and the People of this country, we lament, nor do we less lament, that while obvious and salutary maxims are slighted on the one side; visionary and impracticable schemes are indulged on the other.

The extraordinary, and almost miraculous revolutions in Government, and in sentiment, which have lately astonished the earth, and still confound speculation, have produced this effect, among many others, on the minds both of actors and spectators, both of those who applauded, and those who execrate the scene, that, at this present moment, they have more inflamed

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enthusiasm and resentment, than they have informed or regulated the understanding. The magnitude of the subject, not yet fully comprehended perhaps by any man, overpowers and distracts. The yet dazzled eye, neither accurately distinguishes colours, nor duly estimates proportions. The mind in ferment may exert energy, but seldom deliberation or wisdom.

That the discussions and speculations occasioned by those transactions, should operate with peculiar energy on the People of this country, is not to be wondered at: circumstanced as they are, they must be callous indeed, if they did not feel with ardour, and pursue with vehemence, every sentiment embracing the interests of freedom, and crushing the insolence of power. To repress this generous and natural feeling is not the object of our Association. We are not wicked enough to wish, or foolish enough to expect, that we could persuade three-fourths of our countrymen to remain contented with total exclusion from even the name of a Constitution, or the remainder to be amused with the mockery of that name, while they are robbed of its essence.

Is any man the friend of peace and public order? We call on him, as he values the blessings, to come forward and subdue that corruption of Government which is the bane of both. Does he revere that original obligation of society, connecting the husbandman who tills the land, with the Sovereign who reigns over it; by which industry is bound to sustain power, and power to protect industry, that equal liberty and happiness may flow from both? Let him correct and humble the profligate Administration which wrings from the labour of the peasant, what may corrupt the virtue of the Senator, and which drains the sources of national wealth that it may pollute the sources of national honour. Does he love that beautiful gradation of society, which gives to toil, and talents, and virtue, their stations and their forms, which kindles them where they were not, and rewards them where they are? Let him join us, in publicly reprobating and effectually destroying that disgraceful traffic in which the plunder that has been earned by past infamy is allowed to become the purchase of future honours, in which men are enriched by the sale of their consciences and enobled by the application of their riches.

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Does any man wish to uphold that deference to public sentiment, which preserves a chance for the reform of abuse, by deterring men from avowing its exercise? Let him shame and terrify that public delinquency, which openly boasts of corrupting the people's representatives, with the money of the people. When the pretence to virtue is thrown away, as an useless incumbrance, and the foulest acts, avowed by their foulest names, are held forth to the people as the regular system of Government, when wicked acts challenge the public vengeance by insolent promulgation, the measure of vice and folly is full, and the citizen who does not join in reformation becomes an accomplice in the guilt of his rulers.

But, in pursuing that reform, the abuses of our Constitution should not make us forget that we have one. Nor should our disgust at Corruption render us insensible to the evils of Faction.

Circumstanced as we are, it would not perhaps be surprizing, if the many real blessings still enjoyed by the people, and the many more which the admirable principles of the Constitution place within their reach, should seem keliely to be generally undervalued or forgotten;

or if some spirits inflammable and inconsiderate, or others, less benignant and disinterested, should thence be tempted to overlook the horrors attendant on commotion, and to pursue theories yet unproved by experience.

Against such delusions we warn the people. Living under a Constitution, one of whose peculiar excellence is, that its abuses may be corrected without violating its essence, or even slighting its forms, we can have no rational temptation to encourage or encounter the evils which have flowed from a total want of constitution in a neighbouring country. It is not necessary for us to tear down our constitution, and efface its ancient landmarks and foundations. Nor need we rush voluntarily and wantonly into those miseries into which France has been precipitated, by a perhaps inevitable necessity.

No! Arms are the last resource of misery driven to despair. A reform, and that a radical and effectual one, there will be. There is no human power that can lawfully or successfully resist this reasonable, constitutional, and now indispensable object, if the PEOPLE with an united, solemn, and determined voice shall pronounce---“ WE WILL IT.”

We

We exult to live in a country where the voice of the People once plainly and decidedly uttered, is a thunder which no Government dares resist, and before which all corruption must disperse. The tumult of intemperance may be derided and subdued by the feeblest minister, but it is not within the limits of Ministerial daring to resist the firm and temperate demands of the Irish People.

In order, however, to render this demand irresistible, it is necessary that the public sentiment should be explicitly and generally understood. A disgust at the profligacy of Government may instigate warm men to sedition. An abhorrence of sedition may induce even good men to support a system Government which they cannot approve, or, which would be equally fatal to the well-being of the country; the suspense arising from the opposite impulses may reduce moderate and timid men to a state of inaction, and thus leave the nation unprotected, to groan beneath the oppressions of the corrupt, or to tremble at the violence of the seditious. At such a moment, to be silent is to be criminal. It becomes the duty of every good citizen and honest man, to make his voice heard, and his sentiments known. We therefore, "The Friends of the Constitution,
" Liberty

"Liberty and Peace," thus publicly declare our political sentiments.

1st. That the principles of the British Constitution, are founded in wisdom and justice, equally providing for the liberty and happiness of the people.

2dly. That an Hereditary Monarch, the sole executive power, an Assembly of Nobles, emanating from the Crown, and a body of Representatives, derived from the people by free and general election, are each of them integral, vital and essential parts of our Constitution, inso-much that the decay or corruption of any of them will taint or destroy the whole system.

3dly. That the representative part of our Legislature is not derived from the people by the free and general election which the fundamental principles of our Constitution require, and the state and condition of this nation would warrant.

4thly. That the permanent peace and welfare of Ireland can only be established by the abolition of all civil and political distinctions arising from difference in religious opinions, and by the radical and effectual reform in the Commons House of Parliament; and that these essential

sential objects once obtained, the people ought to remain content and grateful. With such a Constitution, and not with less, will we be satisfied. We therefore call upon every man, whether he prefer Liberty to Peace, or Peace to Liberty, to support the honest and avowed principles upon which this Society is founded, at the present alarming crisis, neither Liberty nor Peace can be established, unless by the united firmness and moderation of the friend of both.

Resolved, That every person on becoming a Member of this Society, do subscribe the following

DECLARATION.

“ I solemnly profess and declare, that I will, by all lawful means, promote a radical and effectual Reform in the Representation of the People in Parliament, including persons of all religious persuasions ; and that I will unceasingly pursue that object untill it shall have been unanimously obtained. And seriously apprehending the dangerous

gerous consequence of certain levelling tenets, and seditious principles, which have been lately disseminated, I do further declare, that I will resist all attempts to introduce any new form of Government into this country, or in any manner to subvert or impair our Constitution, consisting of King, Lords and Commons.

Resolved, That this Society, conscious of its good intentions, but diffident of its ability to judge of the best means of attaining an object of such magnitude and difficulty as that which it has proposed, deems it essential to that object, and therefore respectfully recommends that similar Associations should be formed in every county or principal Town throughout the kingdom. With such Associations, and with every individual friend to the Constitution, Liberty, and Peace of these Kingdoms, this Society will be happy to communicate, and will thankfully receive every species of information concerning Facts, or even hints, concerning Plans and Principles which may assist in deciding on matters either of propriety or expediency. Such materials the Society will deem it a duty to arrange and digest, and, as soon as it shall be enabled to select or form a plan of representation, which
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may appear worthy the attention of the public, it will, with the utmost deference, lay such Plan before the People of Ireland, for their consideration and correction, previous to its being submitted to the wisdom of the Legislature.

Signed, by Order of the Society,

、 RICHARD GRIFFITH, Secretary.

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